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FM AMEMBASSY CHISINAU  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 6032  
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 CHISINAU 001486

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STATE FOR EUR/UMB

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/182017

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MD](#)

SUBJECT: LUPU: BALACED AND HELPFUL

Classified By: Ambassador Michae D. Kirby for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary: In a wide-ranging meeting with the Ambassador December 17, Parliamentary Speaker Marian Lupu continued to be very interested in visiting the U.S. to meet Speaker Nancy Pelosi. He promised to help get a bilateral Article 98 agreement signed to take steps to have a new Moldovan TIP Committee Chair named, and to help ensure that the property under USG consideration for a new embassy compound is not sold off at auction. Lupu understood the Ambassador's points on media freedom and the OM's dismal record at the European Court of Human Rights, and will try to help push for a GOM-Romanian border treaty. The Ambassador and Speaker agreed to continue their dialogue at a private luncheon next week. End Summary.

Possible Visit to the U.S.

12. (SBU) The Ambassador began the meeting by raising the idea of trying to arrange a visit to the U.S. for Speaker Lupu to meet with his counterpart Nancy Pelosi. (Lupu had raised the idea earlier in the year with the Ambassador and with a CodeL.) The Ambassador mentioned that during his last visit to Washington in September, he had raised this idea with Congressman Price (D-NC), who had promised to support it. Lupu said it would be a great pleasure and honor to be able to make this trip. The Ambassador promised to pursue the idea further on his next trip to DC in early January.

Some Progress on Article 98

13. (SBU) Having heard that the Moldovan Parliament was on the verge of ratifying the Rome Statute, the Ambassador raised Article 98, and presented the Speaker with a non-paper on our concerns that Moldova appeared to be moving to join Rome before signing the Article 98 agreement with us. Speaker Lupu explained that the Rome Statute had not yet reached the Parliament. The President, he noted, is responsible for forwarding it to parliament for ratification, but has not yet done so. If the request were not sent over in the next few days, it would be impossible to adopt it before the upcoming holiday recess started December 28.

14. (C) Lupu further noted that he remembers very well discussions in April 2007 where a firm decision was made to sign a bilateral Article 98 agreement with the United States. He does not see any reasons why this decision should be changed. He reassured the Ambassador that the Parliament was merely in standby status right now, and promised to raise the issue with the President and the Prime Minister. Lupu understood that there was military assistance at risk, and agreed that the best solution was for Moldova to first sign an Article 98 Agreement and then to ratify the Rome Statute.

Moldova Still Needs a TIP Coordinator

15. (C) The Ambassador explained that Moldova was placed on Tier Two Watchlist in 2007 because of concerns that the government is not taking the trafficking issue seriously enough. If Moldova were placed on Tier Three, the Ambassador said the USG would be required to limit some assistance programs. The Ambassador suggested one sign of taking trafficking more seriously would be catching and prosecuting some officials involved in trafficking. Another key action would be to appoint a new Chair of the National Anti-Trafficking Committee; since Vrabie was appointed Minister of Defense in July 2007, no one has taken over his former position on anti-trafficking. (Minister of Interior Papuc has the job, but according to Moldovan rules a deputy prime minister must serve as chair.) Lupu expressed surprise that in all this time no new chair had been named. He promised to bring this situation to the attention of the Parliamentary Committee on Security Issues headed by Stoicov, to ensure that the committee passed the message on to the government that a new appropriate chair should be named.

Don't Auction Off the Potential NEC Site

16. (C) The Ambassador mentioned the USG interest in finding a site for a new Embassy building. President Voronin had suggested a Ministry of Defense site near MoldExpo, which is of adequate size (7-1/2 hectares) and centrally located. The Ambassador said the USG is looking seriously at that site,

but noted that our process takes time. When President Voronin told the Ambassador about the site he said the government planned to ask parliament for permission to auction off the site. The Ambassador assured Speaker Lupu

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that if we indeed wanted the site the USG would pay an appropriate price for it, but stressed that the USG could not purchase it at an auction. The Ambassador requested that the parliament slow down any request to pass a bill calling for an auction of the site. The Speaker promised to check into the legal situation affecting the property.

Keep Media Free, but Learn to be More Pro-Active  
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17. (C) The Ambassador raised several disturbing recent media freedom issues and reminded Lupu that in the run-up to the March 2009 elections the world will be looking at press freedom in Moldova. Lupu acknowledged that media problems do exist. The Ambassador stressed that the USG does not care which party wins the election; we want Moldova to win. For that to happen, the Ambassador stated, the elections must be conducted fairly. The Ambassador also stressed how closely the elections would be watched by the EU as free and fair elections are a precondition for EU candidacy.

18. (SBU) Rather than trying to control the media, the GOM should learn more about putting out its message, and allowing the media to report freely. The Ambassador, therefore, suggested a program which would bring four Moldovan press spokesmen to the U.S. on an Open World program. Spokespersons for the President, Prime Minister, Speaker and Minister of Foreign Affairs would have the opportunity to learn how our spokespersons work during a ten-day visit to the United States. There they would learn how to be more pro-active in telling the government's story. While in DC they could perhaps spend time at the White House, Congress and State Department to see how U.S. press spokespersons work. Lupu said that such a trip could be a very useful experience and was enthusiastic about the idea of sending his own press spokeswoman on such a trip.

Moldova Still Interested in Border Treaty with Romania  
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19. (C) The Ambassador noted that Moldova won no "style points" in world opinion for its recent expulsion of two Romanian diplomats and for giving them only 24 hours to leave Moldova. Lupu agreed, saying that in his personal opinion this step was not a correct one. He hypothesized that some of the GOM's anger stemmed from recent Romanian comments referring to the "so-called Republic of Moldova" at a meeting of representatives of the Romanian and Russian Orthodox Churches in Bulgaria. Lupu noted that despite political tiffs between Moldova and Romania, the day after the expulsions Foreign Minister Stratan said that Moldova is still interested in signing border and friendship treaties with Romania. On an encouraging note, the Ambassador suggested that progress on the Border Treaty would send a positive signal about Moldova's European vector. Lupu agreed, suggesting that any problems about the question of two languages could be handled via the Bulgarian-Macedonian solution saying that "The Treaty is made in the official languages of both countries." Lupu noted that rather than focusing on statements of political radicals, it would be more productive to work constructively with balanced leaders such as PM Tareceanu.

Moldova's Losses at European Court of Human Rights  
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110. (C) Noting Moldova's dismal record at the European Court of Human Rights, the Ambassador suggested that the GOM needs to work to improve its record. As each loss costs the GOM 20-50 thousand Euro, it is in Moldova's interest, he said, to work at improving its record. Lupu noted that he was particularly worried about the next case about ownership which would be coming up in Strassbourg soon. Lupu stated that laws on reform of the judiciary system would enter into force on the first of January. Hopefully, he added, these reforms might improve the GOM profile in Strassbourg.

Comment:  
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111. (C) Lupu is a moderate and balanced leader who listens carefully to our concerns with an open mind, and understands the issues. Though it is not yet clear if he will stay with the PCRM or move out on his own, it is clear that he is a leader who gets it. With his youth, excellent English and French, he presents a very progressive face on PCRM leadership. He would very much like to be President Voronin's successor after 2009. It is not clear, however, that he has much support within the PCRM. For now, we will be glad to see him deliver the progress he promised on Article 98, on having a TIP chair appointed, and on helping

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us to obtain our NEC site. The Ambassador has already raised these points with the Prime Minister, and plans to raise them later this week with the Foreign Minister. End Comment.

